DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 349 397 CE 061 859

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TITLE Consumer Education for the Elementary School. Trends and Issues Alerts.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, Ohio.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 92
CONTRACT RI88062005
NOTE 4p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Consumer Economics; *Consumer Education; Decision Making Skills; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Curriculum; *Money Management; *Problem Solving; Thinking Skills

ABSTRACT

This resource list cites nationwide tests indicating that many teenagers and adults have not been well prepared to function as marketplace consumers. It notes that a survey of chief state school administrators (1990) found unanimous support among respondents for consumer education as a top or middle priority in educational revitalization. The resources listed here illustrate how children at the elementary school level can acquire consumer concepts and develop daily living skills including decision making, problem solving, and critical thinking skills. This annotated list provides a sampling of how consumer education is being incorporated into the elementary school program and notes sources of organizational support for establishing or expanding such a program. The list includes 19 print resources and 3 resource organizations. (NLA)

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Consumer Education for the Elementary School

Trends and Issues Alerts

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TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERTS

CONSUMER EDUCATION FOR THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Nationwide tests indicate that many teenagers and adults have not been well prepared to function as consumers in the marketplace (Brobeck 1990, 1991). A survey of chief state school administrators (Scott 1990) found unanimous support among respondents that consumer education should be a top or middle priority in the efforts to revitalize education in the nation's schools.

Although much of the attention given to consumer education has been at the secondary level, some parents, educators, and advocates have recognized the need for consumer education earlier in the school curriculum. "Every American makes consumer . . . choices. Five-year-olds are influencing consumer choices, even if they are not actually purchasing items" (Hisgen 1990, p. 5).

Many consumer concepts can be introduced in meaningful ways during the elementary school years. Through the use of real-world topics and materials dealing with consumer concepts, children can acquire functional language, reading, mathematics, and social skills. Children can also develop decision-making, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills that are important in daily living.

The following print resources provide a sampling of how consumer education is being incorporated into the elementary school program and sources of organizational support for establishing or expanding such a program.

Print Resources

Atwood, V. "Bubble-Good Data: Product Testing and Other Sources." *Social Education* 49, no. 2 (February 1985): 146-149. (EJ 312 864)

In this mini-unit on consumerism, elementary students test a product such as bubble gum, study how it is advertised, and make their own advertisement.

Baecher, C., and Holmes, A. *Product Testing Activities by Consumer Reports*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1992.

A teaching guide and student databook provide activities for K-12 students to develop a healthy skepticism about consumer goods. Applies math, science, and technology to testing of such everyday products as bandages, jeans, popcorn, and soft drinks.

Brobeck, S. *Student Consumer Knowledge: Results of a Nationwide Test*. Washington, DC: Consumer Federation of America; New York: American Express Co., 1991.

_____. *U.S. Consumer Knowledge: Results of a Nationwide Test*. Washington, DC: Consumer Federation of America; Cleveland, OH: TRW Foundation, 1990.

Reports on results of surveys in which samples of high school students and adults answered multiple-choice questions on consumer subjects.

Economic Education for Early Elementary Grades: An Integrated Basic Skills Approach. Bloomington, IN: Agency for Instructional Technology, 1988. (ED 301 177)

Describes five 15-minute videos for 7- to 10-year-olds and a teacher's video guide to integrating five economic concepts while reinforcing language arts, math, and problem solving.

Economics for Kids. National Council on Economic Education, 432 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016.

This periodical for teachers is packed with ready-to-go lessons and reproducible activities.

Elementary Economics: A Bibliography. Chicago: Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 1985. (ED 316 490)

Lists materials from sources other than commercial publishers, including supplemental print resources, teaching kits, microcomputer disks, and audiovisuals. Indicates grade level and concept areas covered.

Frank, J.; Dulmes, P.; and Bannister, R. *Children and Money: Teaching Guides K-6*. Ypsilanti: National Institute for Consumer Education, Eastern Michigan University, 1990.

Guide titles are Children Are Consumers, Children Make Decisions, Children Count Money, Children Earn Money, and Children Save Money. Activities can be integrated into social studies, reading, and arithmetic lessons.

Hennessey, G. "Caveat Emptor Isn't Greek to Me." *Social Science Record* 24, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 42-44. (EJ 354 835)

Sixth-grade consumer education unit includes activities for teaching about money, goods and services, smart shopping practices, and advertising.

Hisgen, J. *Into Adolescence: Becoming a Health-Wise Consumer. A Curriculum for Grades 5-8. Contemporary Health Series*. Santa Cruz, CA: Network Publications, 1990. (ED 324 600)

Provides middle schools students information they need to become knowledgeable consumers of health products and services. Topics include food, health/beauty products, decision making, influence of advertising, and peer acceptance.

Knauer, V., and Steeves, R. ***Suggested Guidelines for Teaching Units (Grades K-12) on Consumers, the Economy, and the U.S. Constitution***. Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Consumer Affairs; Columbus: Ohio Department of Education, 1987. (ED 287 796)

Focuses classroom learning experiences on the freedoms and privileges of consumers in the U.S. market. Lesson themes are scarcity, money and barter, marketplace interdependence, constitutional protections, money and banking, and government and the economy.

Lankiewicz, D. "Magellan's Shopping List: A Lesson in Decision Making." ***Curriculum Review*** 25, no. 2 (November-December 1985): 84-86. (EJ 327 046)

Lesson strategy in which students simulate planning and choosing food for Magellan's voyage, using geography, economics, health science, and consumer knowledge.

Let's Reduce and Recycle: A Curriculum for Solid Waste Awareness. Washington, DC: Office of Solid Waste, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1990.

Lessons and activities for K-12 students cover such topics as the value of natural resources, importance of recycling, and responsibility of each person to dispose of personal trash.

Personal Finance: Common Curriculum Goals. Salem: Oregon Department of Education, 1990. (ED 322 346)

Curriculum guide organized in five strands: financial planning, credit, purchase of goods and services, rights and responsibilities in the marketplace, and selected essential learning skills.

Scott, C. ***1990 National Survey: The Status of Consumer Education in United States Schools, Grades K-12***. Chatham, NJ: National Coalition for Consumer Education, 1990. (ED 329 773)

A survey of chief state school administrators from the 50 states and the District of Columbia found that 31 of 51 have a consumer education policy; nearly all of the 31 offer elementary consumer education. Most include decision making, economics, personal finance, and rights and responsibilities.

Selling America's Kids: Commercial Pressures on Kids of the 90s. Mount Vernon, NY: Consumers Union Education Services, 1990.

Identifies types of commercial pressure on young people between ages 8 and 14. Surveys trends in marketing directed to children and points to problems that should be addressed by parents, schools, and governments.

Teaching Economics in the Mini-Economy. Indianapolis: Indiana Department of Education, 1988. (ED 302 470)

Guide introduces elementary teachers to economic concepts appropriate to the curriculum and explains how to use mini-economy activities to teach these concepts.

A Teaching Guide to 'Zillions'. Consumer Reports Classroom Program, P.O. Box 3760, Jefferson City, MO 65102.

Provides guidelines for teachers for using ***Zillions***, a consumer magazine for children.

Trede, M. "Are You a Conscious Consumer?" ***Gifted Child Today*** 13, no. 6 (November-December 1990): 21-25. (EJ 421 421)

This chapter from a book on writing skills for gifted students focuses on consumer education, with examples from language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science.

Resource Organizations

National Coalition for Consumer Education, 434 Main Street, Suite 201, Chatham, NJ 07928-2120 (201/635-1916).

National Council on Economic Education, 432 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016 (212/685-5499). Offers a catalog of materials.

National Institute for Consumer Education, 207 Rackham Building, West Circle Drive, Easter Michigan University, Ypsilanti, MI 48197 (313/487-2292). Operates the Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Consumer Education. Publishes ***Elementary Resources in Consumer and Economic Education*** and other publications.

This ***Trends and Issues Alert*** was developed in 1992 by Sandra Kerka and Patricia Bonner with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under Contract No. RI88062005. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of OERI or the Department. This ***Alert*** was developed in conjunction with the Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Consumer Education. It may be freely reproduced.

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